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Central Intelligence Bulletin

JCS and State department
review(s) completed.

Top Secret

c 159

19 December 1966

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Approved For Release 2003/04/18 : CIA-RDP79T00975A009500060001-0

Approved For Release 2003/04/18 : CIA-RDP79T00975A009500060001-0

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19 December 1966

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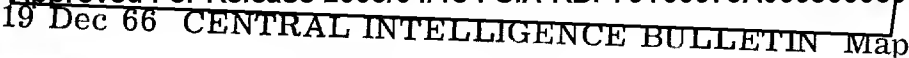
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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: Two battalions of the US 1st Air Cavalry Division engaged and surrounded what is believed to be the 9th Battalion of the 18th North Vietnamese Army Regiment on 17 December during Operation THAYER II in Binh Dinh Province. The enemy broke contact six hours after the initial engagement but left 50 killed. Three NVA soldiers were also captured.

US losses were 26 killed and 70 wounded. In addition, one US helicopter was destroyed, four received major damage and nine others received minor damage. Casualties to US helicopter crews were two killed and eight wounded.

An additional 15 enemy soldiers were killed in two separate engagements in the same area on 18 December. US forces suffered no casualties.

The recent upsurge in Viet Cong harassing actions in the IV Corps area continued over the weekend. Friendly casualties in three separate attacks in three different provinces were 39 killed and 23 wounded. Friendly forces also lost some 75 weapons. South Vietnamese forces in one reaction to these attacks reported killing 19 Viet Cong and capturing nine prisoners during Operation NGO QUYEN, a one-day reaction sweep on 17 December.

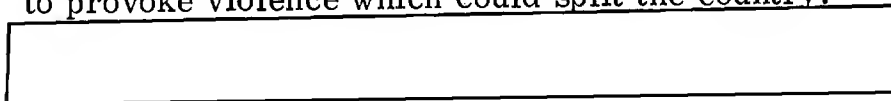
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Togo: The political situation remains tense and uncertain, with the outcome dependent on the army.

Antoine Meatchi, who was involved in last month's abortive coup, lost his post as vice president on 14 December but retains his position as minister of interior. He has turned down President Grunitzky's offer of an ambassadorship, and warned that he will resist any attempt to remove him from the government.

Grunitzky cannot act against Meatchi without army support. Army Chief of Staff Eyadema, however, has so far refused to take sides in the current confrontation. The army is reported to be divided in its loyalties, and Eyadema may fear that he could not hold it together if violence broke out.

Meatchi and some leftists who back him may have the potential by appealing to northern tribal loyalties to provoke violence which could split the country.



Iraq: Baghdad is beginning to realize that it is the main victim of Syria's dispute with the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC).

President Arif is reportedly dismayed that his government is losing \$750,000 daily in oil royalties--70 percent of Iraq's total revenue. He had not been told that Syria would immediately stop the flow of oil. Rumors that Arif intends to dismiss his prime minister are rampant in Baghdad.

The Baghdad press abruptly changed its tone during the past week and now is stressing that, while Iraq supports Syria in its dispute with IPC, Iraq must not be made to suffer financially.

The French partner in IPC, Campagnie Francaise des Petroles, which ordinarily depends heavily on Iraqi oil, has arranged with the USSR for about half its January-February requirements. Arrangements for the rest are being made in New York with several American companies.

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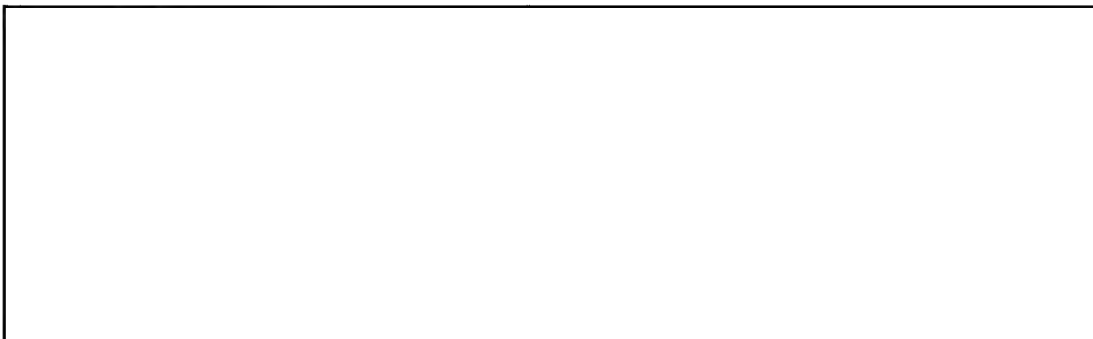
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NOTES

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Congo (Kinshasa): Changes in the Congolese cabinet, announced on 17 December, do not materially affect the inner group close to President Mobutu. Some of the least efficient holders of secondary positions were removed, however, and the appointment of [redacted]

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[redacted] Paul Mushiete as minister of national economy may lead to somewhat more effective administration of the economy. [redacted]

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Yugoslavia: Officials of the Slovenian Republic may have found a solution to the crisis caused by the cabinet's unprecedented resignation on 7 December. The Slovenian premier on 17 December offered to withdraw the resignation if the full assembly, meeting at the end of the month, approves a controversial health bill. The crisis was precipitated when one house of the assembly rejected the bill. [redacted]

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